

Message Text

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21

ACTION NEA-06

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P R 071710Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1648

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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BEIRUT POUCH BAGHDAD

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: SYRIA'S OCTOBER 6 ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

1. SUMMARY: OCTOBER 6 KICKED-OFF CELEBRATIONS MARKING ANNIVERSARY OF OCTOBER WAR. DAY INCLUDED REBROADCAST OF ASAD'S OCTOBER 6, 1973 RPT 1973 SPEECH; VISIT BY PRESIDENT TO VETERANS' CEMETERY; PARADE OF YOUTH, LABOR, AND PARTY GROUPS; AND MASS RALLY. ASAD MADE NO NEW SPEECH NOR DID HE APPEAR AT RALLY. US ROLE IN 1973 OR IN SUBSEQUENT YEAR MENTIONED CRITICALLY ONLY ONCE, IN SPEECH BY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AT EVENING RALLY. THERE SOME EVIDENCE THAT SARG DECISION TO CELEBRATE ANNIVERSARY TAKEN QUITE LATE.

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2. OCTOBER 6, FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF OCTOBER WAR, MARKED BEGINNING OF WEEK-LONG SERIES OF ACTIVITIES TO CELEBRATE OCCASION. GOVERNMENT WORKERS LEARNED PREVIOUS AFTERNOON THAT DAY WAS TO BE SPECIAL HOLIDAY. DAMASCUS WAS DECKED IN BANNERS AND FLAGS. ACTIVITIES BEGAN IN MORNING WITH ILL-ORGANIZED STREET PARADE OF SCHOOL CHILDREN CHANTING SONGS AND CARRYING SLOGAN-PAINTED BANNERS. PRESIDENT ASAD VISITED CEMETERY FOR WAR VETERANS AND PLACED WREATH ON TOMB. SARG DECLARED SPECIAL FIVE MINUTES OF SILENCE IN MEMORY OF WAR DEAT AT 1400 HRS, EXACT TIME SYRIAN ATTACK SAID TO HAVE BEGUN. PARADES OF PARTY FAITHFUL CONTINUED LATE INTO NIGHT.

3. DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS RECEIVED GARBLED MESSAGES DURING AFTERNNON THAT AMBASSADORS WERE TO ASSEMBLE AT DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM AT 1900 HRS FOR "SPECIAL" PROGRAM. NOTABLES ON PODIUM INCLUDED PRIME MINISTER, TWO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS, MINISTER OF DEFENSE, SEC-GEN OF BAATH PARTY, SEVERAL OTHER MINISTERS, AND PARTY LEADERS. RALLY INCLUDED REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE. LEFTOVER SPACE WAS FILLED AT LAST MOMENT WITH STUDENTS. HIGHLIGHT OF EVENING WAS PREMIERE OF NEW POEM BY FOREMOST SYRIAN POET NIZAR KABBANI (BROTHER OF SYRIAN AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON) ENTITLED "ODE TO DAMASCUS." REMARKS BY SUBSEQUENT SPEAKER, THOUGH IMPORTANT TO US IN THAT THEY INCLUDED ONLY DIRECT REFERENCE TO US THAT WE AWARE OF DURING DAY, WERE ALMOST TOTALLY LOST IN CONTINUING CLAMOR ABOUT NEW POEM.

4. THESE REMARKS WERE DELIVERED BY ABDULGHANI KANNOUT, MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, WHO MADE REPRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE FRONT. REFERRING TO RECENT SPEECHES ON OIL PRICES KANNOUT SAID AMERICAN IMPERIALISM ONCE AGAIN HAD "DECLARED WAR AGAINST THE ARAB NATION, PLACING ON IT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN THE WORLD (WHEN IN FACT IT) IS THE RESULT OF THE IMPERIALIST SYSTEM AND THE OUTCOME OF ITS MONOPOLIES AND GREEDS." HE ADDED THAT THIS "WAR IS ATTEMPT TO IGNORE THE REASONS OF THE ME PROBLEM, TO OFFEND THE ARAB PEOPLE, TO BREAK ISOLATION FROM WHICH ISRAEL SUFFERS, TO DWINDLE THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WORLDWIDE SUPPORT FOR THE JUST ARAB CAUSE, AND TO HIDE US AND ISRAELI RESPONSIBILITY IN EXPOSING WORLD SECURITY AND STABILITY AS WELL AS PROGRESS TO DANGER." HE ALSO SAID THAT SYRIA TODAY ASSERTS THAT "THE WAR WITH ISRAEL HAS NOT ENDED YET BECAUSE ZIONIST STUBBORNNESS IS AT ITS HIGHEST DEGREE AND AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL CONTINUES TO INCREASE AND EXPAND."

5. KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT RALLY WAS BAQIR YASIN, DEPUTY BAATH PARTY LEADER. HE MADE NO DIRECT REFERENCE TO US. HE SPOKE ABOUT BEAUTY OF ARAB UNITY IN OCTOBER WAR. HE EMPHASIZED THAT OCTOBER WAR HAD MADE EFFECTIVE USE OF ALL MILITARY, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES FOR ATTAINING VICTORY. OIL WEAPON WAS AN EXAMPLE CITED. YASIN CLOSED HIS SPEECH WITH SUMMATION THAT, DESPITE SUCCESS OF LAST YEAR, TOTAL ARAB CAPABILITIES WERE NOT USED TO THEIR FULLEST. "SOME COUNTRIES LOITERED," HE SAID, "TO EVADE THEIR ARAB COMMITMENTS." OTHERS, HE CLAIMED, USED CIRCUMSTANCES OF WAR TO INCREASE PRODUCTION AND ACCUMULATE LARGE SUMS OF MONEY WHICH THEY NOT USING TO HELP THEIR PEOPLE BUT "TO SPEND HERE AND THERE FOR THE PURCHASE OF CHEAP CONSCIENCES AND TO CREATE CHAOS, DOUBTS, AND DIVISIONS." YASIN ENDED BY SAYING SYRIA HAD CONTINUED TO FIGHT ALONE AFTER OCTOBER AND THAT WAR HAD NOT BEEN ENDED BY THE CEASEFIRE. HE ADDED THAT DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT IS "ONLY STEP TOWARD COMPLETE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL THE OCCUPIED LANDS."

6. COMMENT: ABSENCE OF MAJOR PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS OR APPEARANCE BY ASAD AT RALLY WAS SURPRISING. SECRETARY-GENERAL OF BAATH PARTY WAS ON PODIUM AT MASS RALLY BUT DEPUTY DELIVERED KEYNOTE SPEECH. WHOLE AFFAIR SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN IMPROVISED AT LAST MOMENT AND RELATIVELY SUBDUED. SCHOOLS RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS ON THURSDAY TO SUSPEND CLASS WORK ON OCTOBER 6 AND DEVOTE ENTIRE DAY TO CELEBRATIONS OF ANNIVERSARY. THIS INSTRUCTION SUPERSEDED BY PRESIDENTIAL DECREE LATE SATURDAY MAKING OCTOBER 6 NATIONAL HOLIDAY FOR ALL GOVERNMENT WORKERS AND SCHOOLS.

7. THERE WERE MANY IN DIPLOMATIC CORPS WHO QUESTIONED WHETHER IT APPROPRIATE OCCASION FOR CORPS TO ATTEND. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN ANY EVENT, ONLY 24 DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS WERE REPRESENTED; THIS EMBASSY BY POLOFF. SURPRISINGLY, JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR WAS ONLY ARAB AMBASSADOR PRESENT. WE LEARNED LATER THAT IRAQI AND LIBYAN AMBASSADORS HAD ABSOLUTELY REFUSED TO ATTEND ON GROUNDS THEY DID NOT CONSIDER OCTOBER 73 ANYTHING TO CELEBRATE; IT HAD BEEN DEFEAT, NOT VICTORY. ALL ARABS EXCEPT JORDANIANS SEEM TO HAVE FOUND EXCUSES NOT TO ATTEND. ALL COMMUNIST MISSIONS WERE REPRESENTED INCLUDING SOVIET AMBASSADOR WHO QUITE CLEARLY MISSED THE SINGLE REFERENCE IN ALL THE SPEECHES TO HELP GIVEN GIVEN SYRIA BY SOVIETS. MURPHY

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